

The question of capital punishment is one that may be determined by the reverent acceptance of the teachings of the Scriptures or by a regard to expediency. The words of the Almighty recorded in Gen. 9: 6 are either a prediction or a command. If the former, they have not been fulfilled, for countless murderers like Herod the Great and Henry VIII have escaped punishment at the hands of men. The case of Cain has been wrongly presented in the discussion of this subject in the pulpit. That he killed his brother is clear, that he murdered him is doubtful. The word used in Gen. 4: 8 is *haray*, the same that is employed in Gen. 20: 4, where it certainly does not mean murder. It denotes to kill, to take away life for any purpose. *Katal and ratsach*, as in Job 24: 14 and Exodus 20: 13, are the words used to express murder. The same difference in the terms employed is found in the New Testament mention of Cain's crime. When murder is spoken of as in Matthew 23: 35, the unmistakable Greek term *phonuco* is used; but when Cain's deed is mentioned *sphatto* is used, as in I. John 3: 12. Cain, it would therefore appear, committed manslaughter, striking his brother a passionate blow without intending to kill him, but unrestrained by the fear of doing it. His punishment has been more strangely mis-represented than his crime. There is something almost ludicrous in the assertion made in one of the sermons preached in Toronto that he was imprisoned for life. His punishment consisted of three things. 1st, he was not allowed to till the earth; 2nd, he was driven forth from the visible symbol of the Divine presence; 3rd, he was to be a murderer on the earth. If, as we have been told, his case is to be an authoritative precedent for the punishment of murder, the judicial sentence upon any one convicted of that crime will be that he is not to enjoy ordinary religious privileges, is to be debarred from agricultural pursuits, and is not to be allowed to have any permanent residence in any civilized community. The civil law of Moses has nothing to do with the subject so far as modern society is concerned. Its provisions were temporary enactments for the culture and discipline of a semi-barbarous people not fitted to receive a milder code. With the ceremonial law it was abrogated by the introduction of Christianity, which, however, left unrepealed the moral law contained in the decalogue and the earlier enactment given to Noah in Gen. IX., 6.